

REMARKS

The following remarks are in response to the Office Action dated December 30, 2005. Claims 1-36 are now present in this case. Claims 27-36 are allowed. Claim 1 is amended. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims pending in the application are included herewith.

The applicants wish to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the allowance of claims 27-36 and for the further indication that claims 15-21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, as discussed in detail below, claims 15-21 are believed allowable in their present form.

Claims 1-4, 8, and 26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,338,368 to Dotts et al. The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and request reconsideration. In a prior response, the applicants asserted that the thermal tiles of Dotts form the outer skin surface of the orbital vehicle while the Office Action appears to take the position that the thermal tiles in Dotts are mounted on the outer skin of the vehicle. Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the outer skin surface of the orbital vehicle is formed by a thermal protection system and that the attachment positions are located on the outer skin surface. In the case of Dotts, such a thermal protection system is formed by the thermal tiles. Dotts does not teach or suggest any attachment positions located on the outer surface of the thermal protection system. Thus, claim 1 is clearly allowable over Dotts. Claims 2-4, 8, and 26 are also allowable in view of the fact that they depend from claim 1, and further in view of the recitation in each of those claims.

Claims 1-4, 8, and 12-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,402,965 to Cervisi et al. The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and request reconsideration. In a previous response, the applicants asserted that the outer skin surface of the orbital vehicle is formed by the thermal protection system while the Office Action appears to take the position that the thermal protection system in Cervisi is mounted on the outer skin of the orbital vehicle. Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the outer surface is formed by the thermal protection system. Cervisi does not teach or suggest any attachment positions located on the outer skin surface of the orbital vehicle, as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, claim 1 is clearly allowable over Cervisi. Claims 2-4, 8, and 12-14 are also allowable in view

of the fact that they depend from claim 1, and further in view of the recitation in each of those claims.

Claims 1, 5-7, 9-11, and 22-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Statutory Invention Registration No. H1133 to Bridges et al. combined with Dotts et al. The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and request reconsideration. The inapplicability of Dotts has already been discussed. The combination of Dotts and Bridges does not overcome this serious deficiency. The Office Action cites Bridges for disclosing a reusable orbital vehicle with access panels but admits that Bridges is "silent on the experimental packages." (See Office Action, page 3.) The Office Action asserts that Dotts teaches such experimental packages. However, as discussed above, Dotts does not teach or suggest any experimental packages that are attached at attachment positions on the outer skin surface of the orbital vehicle. As noted above, claim 1 has been amended to more clearly define the outer skin surface of the orbital vehicle is formed by a thermal protection system. Dotts does not teach or suggest any attachment positions located on the outer surface of the thermal protection tiles. Bridges is completely silent as to any thermal protection system whatever. Accordingly, claim 1 is clearly allowable over the combination of Dotts and Bridges. Claims 5-7, 9-11, and 22-25 are also allowable in view of the fact that they depend from claim 1, and further in view of the recitation in each of those claims.

In view of the above remarks, reconsideration of the subject application and its allowance are kindly requested. The applicants have made a good faith effort to place all claims in condition for allowance. If questions remain regarding the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (206) 628-7640.

Respectfully submitted,
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